



**Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 264
House Natural Resources Committee
Representative Andrea LaFontaine, Chair**

Submitted in writing by
Jennifer McKay, Policy Specialist
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
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Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, on behalf of its 2,400 plus members, wishes to provide a recommendation for Senate Bill 264. SB 264 would allow open lake disposal of dredged material. Rather than encouraging open lake disposal of dredged material, dredge material should be treated as a resource and beneficial use of dredged material in the Great Lakes should be pursued as the priority management option.

Open water disposal can result in potential adverse impacts to fishery and benthic habitats. Placing dredged materials in the aquatic area raises several key concerns, including sediment and water quality, sediment transport, water circulation, impacts to fisheries, and impacts to biological communities, especially endangered/threatened species.

The state should not risk the health of the Great Lakes and Michigan's inland waterways by allowing and encouraging open water disposal when there are viable alternatives that could avoid and minimize the potential adverse impacts. A great variety of options for beneficial use exist that should be encouraged instead. Beneficial use is the use of dredged material as a resource instead of disposing of it as a waste. This involves placing or using dredged material for some productive purpose such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, habitat creation or restoration, landscaping, topsoil creation or enhancement, road construction, land creation or reclamation (e.g., strip mines, brownfields), and in the manufacture of aggregates for marketable products such as ceramics or asphalt.

Dredged sediment should be beneficially used as a routine method of business. Numerous projects across the Great Lakes Basin have demonstrated that dredged material can be used and/or recycled in a manner that is beneficial from environmental and economic standpoints. Across the Great Lakes Basin, agencies and companies are embracing beneficial use due to the numerous benefits it can provide economically, environmentally, and socially. Taking

advantage of beneficial uses for dredged material makes good sense. It can save tax dollars that would otherwise be spent on finding and managing disposal sites as well as saves capacity in existing disposal sites. It avoids habitat and fishery impacts that disposal may cause and it can be a low-cost alternative to purchasing materials for projects such as expensive fill for construction.

With proper testing and government guidelines that protect human health and the environment, beneficial use of dredged material allows for a sustainable long-term management option for dredged material management in the Great Lakes Basin. As such, Michigan should not encourage the use of open water disposal, but rather should limit open water disposal of dredged materials to projects that result in an improvement of natural conditions such as habitat enhancement and creation. Michigan should promote beneficial use for all dredging and disposal activities as a sound business practice and as a statewide policy.

If we are going to maintain the proud heritage of the "Great Lakes State" and "Pure Michigan," we must remain vigilant in our efforts to protect our most valuable resources. We hope you will see that open water disposal of dredged material is not best option for Michigan. We suggest removing that provision from Senate Bill 264 and, instead, include language to encourage beneficial use to provide ecological and economic benefits to the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions about the comments provided, please feel free to contact me at jenniferm@watershedcouncil.org or 231-347-1181.

Sincerely,



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